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Posted on **December 1, 2001** by **Editor**



By Mark Szymanski <marks@pacificu.edu>

Pacific University

Shaping the future for women and girls. Speaking out for justice. Changing the world one women at a time. These are the statements that flash across the screen when you view the web site for the American Association of University Women (AAUW). They tout themselves as an organization that promotes education and equity for all women and girls, and the content of their web site supports these assertions. The AAUW's positions and programs to support women stand in stark contrast to the experiences of women in Afghanistan.

As the war in Afghanistan enters it's second month and the Taliban appear to have lost control of the country, we are learning more about the personal stories of life under Taliban rule. The stories involving the oppression of women have been particularly distressing. Since the Taliban took control of the country in the early 1990's. The oppression of women in Afghanistan has been well documented by Human Rights Watch (1), Amnesty International (2), and other groups. Essentially, the Taliban eliminated womens' rights behind the veil of mediaeval Islamic law, Sharia.

According to The Womens' Alliance for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan (WAPHA) (3), a nonpartisan, nonprofit and independent organization that promotes awareness of the human rights violations women have experienced in Afghanistan, women have been stripped of their most basic human rights and any opportunity for professional or personal development. A sampling of the laws in place give a clear picture of the oppression: Women and girls cannot attend school. Women cannot work outside the home. Women cannot leave the home without a male escort. Women cannot reveal any part of their bodies in public and must be fully covered. In addition, women have no recourse in the legal system-in court their testimony is worth half a man's testimony.

Because we live in a country where women serve as judges, senators, heads of churches, and major corporations, and have guaranteed human and civil rights, the conditions of Taliban rule seem incomprehensible. In addition to our laws that guarantee women equal rights, many organizations in the U.S. support women in their efforts to develop professionally and personally. The American Association of University Women is one of these organizations

An important part of the AAUW is their the Educational Foundation. It is the largest source of funding in the world exclusively for graduate women. The foundation distributed \$3.5 million in fellowships, grants, and awards in 2001-02 to women from all over the world. They provide a variety of support for women in different fields including those fields that are traditionally underrepresented by women. Specifically the foundation supports scholars, teachers, local activists, women at critical stages of their careers, and those women pursuing professions traditionally underrepresented by women.

The foundation has a variety of grants and fellowships available. The details of these separate funding sources can be found on the funding section of the AAUW web site (4). The funding sources and the AAUW descriptions follow.

American Fellowships: These fellowships support women doctoral candidates completing dissertations and scholars seeking funds for postdoctoral research leave or for preparing completed research for publication. Applicants must be U.S citizens or permanent residents. One-year postdoctoral research leave fellowships, dissertation fellowships, and summer/short-term research publication grants are offered.

Career Development Grants: These grants support women who hold a bachelor's degree and are preparing to advance their careers, change careers, or re-enter the work force. Special consideration is given to AAUW members, women of color, and women pursuing their first advanced degree or credentials in nontraditional fields.

Approximately 60 grants are available in two categories: **Academic Grants** provide support for course work beyond a bachelor's degree, including a master's degree, second bachelor's degree, or specialized training in technical or professional fields. Course work must be taken at an accredited two- or four-year college or university, or at a technical school that is fully licensed or accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Funds are not available for doctoral-level work.

Professional Development Institute Grants support women's participation in professional institutes that are academically based and include: a focused and specific program of study with identified faculty; fixed schedules and short-term duration (for example, two to eight weeks); and selection/enrollment processes with baseline eligibility criteria. Applicants for Institute Grants must also apply directly to the institute; funds are released upon admission to an eligible institute. Funds may not be used for internships, research, or independent study. Decisions about which professional institutes meet the criteria will be made by the Foundation.

Community Action Grants: These grants provide seed money to individual women, AAUW branches and AAUW state organizations, as well as local community-based nonprofit organizations for innovative programs or nondegree research projects that promote education and equity for women and girls. Two types of grants are available: One-year grants for start-up projects. For this grant, topic areas are unrestricted but should promote education and equity for women and girls. Two-year grants are restricted for projects focused on K-12 girls' achievement in math, science, and/or technology. Projects must involve community/school collaboration. Funds support planning and coalition-building activities during the first year and implementation and evaluation the following year.

Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowships: These fellowships provide professional development opportunities for women public school teachers to improve girls' learning opportunities in math, science, and technology; and promote equity and long-term change in classrooms, schools, and school systems. In 2002-03, Professional Development Fellowships of up to \$5,000 will fund K-12 women public school teachers to attend the dynamic five-day Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute held at the end of July 2002 in Washington, D.C. The fellowship also covers additional professional development workshops or conferences and provides seed money for planning a gender-equity, school-based program.

International Fellowships: These fellowships are awarded for full-time study or research to women who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Both graduate and postgraduate study at accredited institutions are supported. Selection criteria include an outstanding academic record, professional potential, and the potential of the field of study to improve lives of women and girls in the country of origin. Preference is given to women residing in their home countries at the time of application. Six of the 58 awards are available to members of International Federation of University Women affiliate organizations. Recipients of these awards may study in any country other than their own.

As you can see The American Association for University Women is certainly doing its part in shaping the future for women and girls, speaking out for justice, and changing the world one woman at a time.

References

- (1) <http://www.hrw.org/worldreport99/asia>
- (2) <http://www.amnesty.org>
- (3) <http://www.wapha.org>
- (4) <http://www.aauw.org/3000/fdnfelgra.html>

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